Phillip Agee and Edgar Chamorro: Institute for Media Studies

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw3IXtRQMl4 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw3IXtRQMl4)

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Philip Agee and Edgar Chamorro, introduced by Bill (William) Schaap at the the Institute for Media Analysis (Harvard) Conference on Anti Communism, 1988.

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the role that anti communist ideologies anti-communist mythology plays in shaping the way the CIA does what it does we have with us two people eminently suitable for that discussion one who was a case officer for the CIA and one who was an agent for the CIA my right is Philip Agee who spent some 12 years in the CIA as a case officer primarily in Latin America in Mexico Uruguay Ecuador and well I was going to say the man who started it all the first person who ever left the CIA and talked about it and although the mainstream media may refer to Philip Agee as a renegade which is their favorite word for us I think he was a godsend indeed he began a noble tradition that people like Ralph McGehee and john stockwell and others have joined and we can only hope that more and more people who serve in the more brutal branches of the American government will find the moral revulsion that Phil Agee found and come out of the closet and tell us about it move it away from it's too close sorry someone told me to put it close ok it was Alex spreading disinformation on

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it was Alex spreading disinformation on my left is another hero of this same sort head Girja Mauro was a well-known Nicaraguan the descendant of four Nicaraguan presidents one of the tomorrow's they're all they're all related to each other and one who for whatever reasons of misunderstanding fled Nicaragua at the time of the triumph of the Sandinista revolution went to Miami where a short time later he was approached by the CIA and recruited to join the Contra leadership Edgar had worked among other jobs in public relations in Nicaragua and the CIA thought he would not be an ideal person to become a spokesman for the Contras to become a public relations leader for the Contras Edgar also was a Jesuit priest who had actually spent time assigned to a church in the Bronx and had been Dean of the Jesuit University in Managua and had been a professor of philosophy these were not the occupations that impressed the CIA as much of course as his public relations background but I think those were the occupations that ultimately caused him also to see the moral problems with what he was doing to see the lies that he was doing and to learn firsthand how he was being used so we have a user and an uzi with us today and I think it will it will help give a broad perspective of the way the CIA works in the way it uses anti-communism

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works in the way it uses anti-communism we're going to allow half the time this afternoon for questions and I will begin now by turning the floor over to Philip Agee I don't want to start out by insulting anyone but I have a feeling that I started out as a young man like many of you I was brought up and educated to respect the institutions of the United States the political economic social system I was in fact a a privileged beneficiary of this system my father was a successful businessman and I grew up in a a kind of a country club environment

I went to private schools Jesuits in high school then on to the University of Notre Dame it was during my final year there that the CIA came and approached me asked me to go into what they considered to be their most important training program well I had the perfect profile for that during those 1950's because I had gone through the high school period and the university period in late forties up through the mid 50s this was the period as everyone knows of Joe McCarthy at the McCarthy period and also the height of the war the the Cold War and I was in fact a true believer in the crusade in holy war communism all of my formation had been typical anti-communist of that period and so it was only natural that someone with this background accept the CIA's recruitment and at age 22 I was in the CIA beginning to go about the work to preserve the United States this best of all possible worlds from the Menace of Soviet expansionism and world communist

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Soviet expansionism and world communist threats one of the reasons I was able to do this so easily was that I received my university degree an honours degree in fact in philosophy but I didn't have any education at all no political education and it wasn't until I went down to Latin America which began in 1960 I was 25 then having completed the CIA's training course and some military service at age 25 down in South America undercover as a US diplomat taking over operations which my predecessor had been running and being under pressure as is every CIA operations officer in the field pressure to develop new operations to do this you have to learn to speak the language you have to be able to circulate in as wide as fear as possible where the potential recruits are this means undertaking all kinds of leisure activities I played a lot of golf at that point there are others who are do a lot of fishing all these activities which will bring a person into contact with the people who were the CIA is interested in recruiting in fact my last job in the CIA was just that I was sent down to Mexico in 1917 67 as the United States Olympic attache for the 68 games in fact I'm still a CIA officer but that was my cover I went down a year-and-a-half before the games and my job was to look around among all these several thousand people in the Olympic organizing menu a year and a half before the games in order to spot and assess those who would be most useful to the Mexico City CIA program well eventually having seen the realities of Latin America haven't seen the results of our work that is that we

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the results of our work that is that we were supporting the traditional power structures in Latin America we were supporting what is known as the oligarchy despite all the talk of reform of that period in the early sixties you know Kennedy established what was called the Alliance for Progress and there was going to be a great infusion of capital and technology to Latin America in order to ease these prevailing social and economic and justices which everyone agreed were atrocious this was going to be done through economic growth and on the Latin American side they were going to install reforms to ease these anjaan in justices such things as fiscal reform land reform and so forth but the more I was down there and particularly with the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 I came to the conclusion little by little that all that talk about reform was nothing was just that mostly talk and in fact no country in Latin America save Cuba which was the enemy still had changed their societies in any meaningful way so I decided I would leave the CIA both for those political reasons and for personal reasons it happened that my wife and I had separated we were in process of having a divorce I had gone down to Mexico alone and it fell to me to work with a certain person in the organizing organizing committee for the Olympic Games who had been assigned to work with the u.s. embassy and it happened that this person was very attractive and thought that Che Guevara was the most wonderful man in the world we fell in love and I had a double deception to handle for the wresting for the remaining months in the CIA I couldn't tell them about her and her politics or especially of our politics because because they would have considered that to be a security threat and of course I

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to be a security threat and of course I could never tell her about the CIA or my participation in it because she had never seen me she would never spoken to me again well I left the the agency for both those personal and political reasons and with the idea of simply starting a new life forgetting all about that work I'd done

before in the agency and in fact I rolled in the National University of Mexico and a doctoral program in Latin American history and culture with the idea of coming back to the United States perhaps to teach well I was in this program and it was kind of in this in this study and it was a radicalizing experience because I was learning more and more about the realities in history of Latin America and where my work had played a role a contemporary role in these matters and within a year after leaving the agency I began to think the unthinkable those old pressures of disciplines of secrecy and security consciousness had faded away or beginning to fade and I began to think about the possibility of a book well all this has to do with coming to grips with this anti-communism with which I had grown up that because the CIA was established back in 1947 as an action arm of the president without a policy of its own it is told it does what it is told to do by the President of the United States that is what the law says and that is the way it has always been up to the 1980s that is the kaci Reagan years when they tried to establish this off the shelf off the books capability but anti-communism naturally was the justification for everything practically that the CIA does even though in many cases the objects of our operations are far from being communists take one boss for example in the Dominican Republic take Salvador Allende in Chile take goulart in Brazil in the early 1960s take Mossadegh who was an anti-communist

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take Mossadegh who was an anti-communist he was a nationalist anti-communism though is used as the emotional rubric in political rubric actually to cover and to justify these subversive operations abroad they have subversive in the sense that from the very beginning the CIA has used money and control over people to seek control over the so-called free pluralistic democratic institutions of other countries this is what it became known as covered action it began at the very beginning at the first meeting of the National Security Council in 1947 following the passage of the National Security Act which established the CIA and the National Security Council the NSC has the highest policymaking body in matters of Foreign Affairs and national security chaired by the President of the United States having a statutory members the vice-president the secretaries of state and defense and various other high-level officials including the director of what today is known had a different name then but what today is known as the Federal Emergency Management Agency FEMA the CIA is simply an instrument and has been offered these years an instrument of this National Security Council and the President himself it has no policy of a tone of its own it does not make policy at the very first meeting of the NSC the decision was taken to set aside ten million dollars a huge amount of money in those days for secret intervention by the CIA in the Italian election coming up in April 1948 the fear in Washington was that the coalition of socialists communists and others would win the elections after all they had been the backbone of some twenty of resistance to some twenty years of fascism in Italy and now in the first national elections following liberation by the Allies in 1944 the Italian people might give victory to the

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Italian people might give victory to the left and so this ten million dollars was passed in through front organizations in Italy through Italian American organizations in this country through the Vatican and the result was the Christian Democrats won very easily it's hard to measure and determine in any of these types of operations what difference the money made but there was euphoria in Washington and the bureaucratic machinery was then set up to continue and expand these operations this type of thing worldwide and not only in electoral processes but in the institutions of power of countries all around the world and these institutions are the political parties of course the government's the military and security services the trade unions youth and student organizations women's groups religion cultural and professional societies and in a very big way the public information media it's done through infiltrating or recruiting people indigenous people inside these organizations giving them money for the organization but also paying them a salary as a control factor control is a word that every CI a trainee learns early on it means long range control of the natural resources the labor and the markets of other countries but it also means control over individuals and those personal salaries are a control factor every CIA agent and I'm not talking about myself I'm talking about agents who are the indigenous people working for the agency as opposed to the staff officer which I was the

agents are supposed to do exactly what they're told to do with the money they're given and this is a factor as I say which every CI a trainee learns at the beginning well the purpose of these covered action operations was to affect events in a given country they were as I

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given country they were as I demonstrated with the Italian election they were from the very beginning going on and they continued on until today there has never been a pause in these kinds of operations and under the Reagan administration of course they've been very strongly emphasized and given generous funding around the world well it wasn't until much much later in my life that I began to understand that anti communism was you to cover or to justify all of these types of activities when in actual fact the objects or victims of these activities were not in many cases communists at all they were nationalists they were populist they were perhaps socialists but I began to ask myself at one point why is it that social or popular revolution in an impoverished country is such a threat to the United States because almost by definition of the anti-communist political culture in which we live any popular revolution is a threat to the United States communist ism is a very dangerous label I eventually learned it's used to to discredit any revolutionary movement it has been used and I used it myself constantly to discredit any popular revolutionary movement that seeks revolutionary change or fundamental radical change in favor of the poor people and in the so called third world you know these are the vast majorities of the populations in Nicaragua or El Salvador Guatemala anywhere in Latin America the tradition has been that most of the good arable land has been cornered or brought under control through ownership by a very few families and the vast majority of the rural population the peasants are if not totally marginalized from the money

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totally marginalized from the money economy certainly they are living a subhuman existence and if they have any plots of land at all it is normally the money funding a problem that is plots that are too small to be economical these so-called oligarchies are the merchants the bankers the the commercial interests and they are all over Latin America and as I said before we were the people who were most supporting them and they were the people who during the 1960's were most opposed to nd basic fundamental reforms well getting back to the question of why social revolution is a threat to the United States I think the analysis has to come back to the United States itself when asking the question why is it by definition a threat to the United States it reminded me of when I was a trainee in the CIA I was taught or we were taught that the Soviet Union's foreign policy that is its belligerence and its expansionism abroad was a product of its internal system namely the requirements of the Soviet Union the Soviet of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to maintain a monopoly on power in that country and I think most political scientists would agree that any societies or nations foreign policy is largely determined or a product significantly of its internal system and that is why in trying to raise the question and get students for example as I'm touring around universities to ask themselves the questions of why is it that all this political repression is necessary is it in our interest or is it in the interests of just a few people in the United States well yes now how is that

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United States well yes now how is that any better right maybe this is not even on I don't know all right well I try to speak louder I don't know if this one's that's no better either is it alright well I'll just speak louder than what I want to do this when I go around is to talk about what the CIA does a little bit and that is the subversion of these democratic institutions because to the to the degree that the CIA penetrates and controls an electoral process or a political party or a trade union to that degree that institution is unfree so it's a subversion of the free nature of these institutions that's one thing the second thing is the paramilitary operations which are designed to destroy a revolutionary movement through terrorism that is the type of thing that we find in the Contra operation in these recent years during the Reagan period but there is a third type of operation which is just as bad probably worse than any of those and this third type of operation is known as liaison operations liaison operations are all those activities undertaken again in the name of anti-

communism with the local security services of foreign countries around the world they started with the British right after right as soon as the CIA was established and then they went on around the world the CIA even set up in many countries security services as instruments for political control as in Greece following the civil war there the K Y P as in South Korea the KCIA as in Iran the South map and so forth now these security services are some of the nastiest services that anyone will find anywhere they are for example the guatemalan services that the CIA has worked with hand-in-glove since the CIA provoked overthrow of the arbenz

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provoked overthrow of the arbenz government in 1954 nobody knows for sure how many but they're educated guesses are that something between 100,000 and 150,000 people have been murdered in that country since that CIA sponsored coup more than 30 years ago you know Salvador alone you get something like 70,000 people kidnapped tortured to death and their bodies thrown along the roads since the Reagan support Pro began on the other hand you have El Salvador I mean Nicaragua where the casualty figures now stands at up around 70,000 people around 20,000 dead and 50,000 wounded the comparable figure for the United States with a population eighty times that of Nicaragua is something like five and a half million casualties once I went down to the US Embassy in Madrid to the library and I added up the casualty figures for every war in which the United States has been involved for the last 100 years and the casualty figure the total figure comes to less than half the comparable figure for Nicaragua 1.9 million I think it was so you see what a calamity this war this terrorist war this fomenting a civil war in Nicaragua has been for them it has been disastrous and the human cost of these 50,000 people for example who have survived their wounds but many of whom many many have lost arms and legs to live the rest of their life like that well the question is why do we have a government well how do we tolerate that we do these things abroad or that we allow a government to do these things we allow Reagan to carry on this activity and then go on television with the smile and say I'm a contra to you know that is simply disgusting and I think part of the answer or a hint to the answer to why we allow this why it's not much of an issue in this country generally comes in a poll on Americans attitudes toward the government of El Salvador published just a few months ago it was a poll conducted by market opinion research in Detroit which I think is related to the Republicans party remember El Salvador

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Republicans party remember El Salvador is a country that has received three and a half billion dollars from the Reagan administration since 1981 it receives a million and a half dollars every day of some which annually exceeds the whole Salvadoran national budget the government budget it is halted or it is praised by this administration all its propaganda organs as the showcase for the raisin program Reagan Bush program of restoring democracy in Central America well what do Americans think of this government 15% of Americans only 15% think that El Salvador has democratic government despite all the government propaganda around the 1984 elections the support the Duarte you know the CIA passed in millions of dollars to get party elected in 1980 for and as a matter of fact he is according to many reports he's been on the CIA payroll for many years 15 percent only believe that El Salvador has a democratic government 33 percent of Americans don't have the slightest idea what kind of government El Salvador has but then the great revelations according to this poll 35 percent of Americans believe that al Salvador has a pro-soviet government it doesn't say what the remaining 17 percent believe but it wouldn't surprise me if they had Duarte confused with Khomeini and said as Salvador has lamech fundamentalist government well you know it's really ignorant its apathy its disinterest on the part of us Americans generally speaking certainly not the people of this conference but generally speaking that allows Reagan to get away with this and will probably allow Bush to do the same because I have been searching and talking to people looking for indications that the bush program would be any different from the Reagan program and so far I haven't found a word that means that this human cost is going to be continuing people are going to keep

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be continuing people are going to keep on dying down there and it could get much worse in El Salvador as a matter of fact I stopped now in just a moment but I want to mention the FEMA program the recs 84 I know a lot of you know about this it was a program drawn up in the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the early 1980s in the event that the United States had to introduce troops to El Salvador or invaded Nicaragua the government or that is the reagan-bush administration anticipated riots big street demonstrations a lot of civil divil disorder in protest against that invasion of Central America they drew up a document whereby and a plan whereby the president his pen would suspend the Constitution establish as commander-in-chief martial law in this country and hundreds of thousands of people would be rounded up and interned on military reservations I think they selected twelve or fourteen military bases where people would be put without trial without charges just on ice to get them off the streets now in the plan that I've read about supposedly these were going to be undocumented Latin Americans but an actual fact you know is going to be every one of us who went out on the street well that plan of course is still sitting there for the president's signature we're that close to fascism in this country because that's what a military dictatorship would be there would be more and more racism you know more and more sin or phobia and so forth well the problem is that it's not only that we're lucky everybody's lucky I think that the invasions never happened but that doesn't mean they can't happen under Bush because the Salvadoran situation is getting worse and worse the political repression is getting greater there were more des quad assassinations during the first five months of this year than all of last year and the popular organizations are growing again in strength and taking to the streets students trade unionists and so forth and peasant organizations these people

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and peasant organizations these people are being selected out or that is chosen for selected assassination by the military and the death squads which is the same thing practically there and as butch comes into office and as this situation gets worse with the election scheduled for March when arena is likely to take power or at least that it said that they could well take power from the Christian Democrats who are all divided in and as corrupt as they've ever been that means that the situation in salvador for the united states is going to deteriorate and it already is deteriorating the FMN the correlation between the FMLN force and the government military force is going against the government it's going against the military the FMLN is all dispersed in smaller units and it makes sense that has forced the military to do the same thing which makes those military units all the more vulnerable and so the war goes on in a more favorable fashion for the revolutionary forces well what is going to do about that we were going to reach probably within the first couple of years of the bush raishin the danger again that troops might have to be introduced to El Salvador and perhaps an invasion of Nicaragua who knows because the contra has not been able to do it the only other alternative if you want to solve things by force is military so this document of FEMA is very important we may be on the verge of that in very few years thank you all very much for your attention Thank You Flo now we will turn the floor over to Edgar Chamorro last week I watched in TV the story told by himself mr. le whistle or whistle the man of the Holocaust who have been writing so many books that story and he was very candid

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books that story and he was very candid you know saying that after he went through the horror he didn't want to talk at all about it until mr. Francois Maria persuaded him once he was a guest of him stay with him and told him he told the story that Maria is a Christian or Catholic and you see it was talking about Jesus Christ suffering so much and so I said well mouriak back and forth with Jesus Christ offering a Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ so he said finally I have to give it back to him you know with this Jesus Christ suffering you know so much so he told him that he thought that the Jewish people suffer much more than Jesus Christ and that and Maria walked away and then finally stopped him look at him sis did you feel like that why don't you go out and talk about it it says that that make him think that it's important to talk about things that we don't like to I tell you this story because I just watched this in TV and he pressed me because it's very hard to go around talking about this this is all my first year I am NOT doing too much thanks God this year but the yell of the rain trying to get 270 million he tried to help the second time after the hundred million so I was invited

with many groups to go and talk it's very hard you know because the weather I am finding very frustrating is that the more you talk the more you get caught in this kind of I don't know how you call it you know like a game plan it fits the other side and we got nowhere and the people in Aqaba keep suffering so every right this time I accept of course you know a bill shop and Ellen rate in the media Institute were the first people when I left the the contrast that came to visit me and they invited me to write

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to visit me and they invited me to write my story he thought it was important for me was very painful to you know living through that again how you because you have to really go through your life you know I think what did I do that I mean why I let these people use me and what's wrong with me I mean after all you know because anytime you do something like that you are questioning yourself your character your personality your intelligence your your manic what integrity what song or why you were so stupid or so a fool you know so it becomes a very painful and I want to say that because I am going through that kind of crisis you know I don't even want to talk about it too much but I think it's important you know at least once in awhile I accept first to go to the World Court with an affidavit I said well that will do it you know nobody will ask me again you know because he's written there go on read my affidavit please don't don't want to talk about it but know the more once you do something like that the press calm they're good people writing good books you know there are like 20 books on the contrast and the way did I stay had been deceived and so on out there and I can see myself in many of those not even quoted many time but I am there on some tight full chapters you know but the real point I want to say that once you go out to top then people come more and then they're reporters articles people who are writing for history or for the media of TV and so on I'll you know you are being used again you know and then I decided I am going back to Nicaragua of course I was to use me too you know and I have a problem with this thing about using people I think I am coming to different called traveling with the instrumentalization of people

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instrumentalization of people yeah I I think it's a key element at least in the extreme left what I call the extreme left the very radical and the extreme right I have been trying to find myself in the center you know what I don't know what is the center because it's very relative you know when I was criticizing Ryan bring so much to you right that I might be a radical leftist you know because he's so mostly right he makes me look too much to the left you know now they bring somebody they color a mother you know like well he could be more more but what does it mean that you know also you know so I am I am finding that one of the problems is this instrumentalization of people the form is very hard to keep talking and because I think the one of the element we got in the stab of CIA and I believe also or some of the extreme governments that we call of the left radical is this concept of man that is is to be used no I have seen many movements of the left using people I'm a movement of the right and so on so I said that because you know I'm going to have particular crisis I am indeed not really seeing the usefulness but I think okay I wanted to start with those words of mr. Elie Wiesel that it's important to talk because of the horror you know the horror and I think that a intellectuals academics analysts like to make things in abstracts arrived myself in I have here you know the very austere outline not and but the polling is how to translate to you the pain of be news be crafting is important for me the more reversing a

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is important for me the more reversing a thing I felt when I accepted money from the Sierra I guess that makes you a recruited person was you accept money first you know I felt I was not recruited that the CI was working for me because my ego my personality says no I mean the United State we can use them to go back to power should McCallum power strongly tomorrow's want to go back to power my my group my aristocratic blood my elite group my veteran we want to go back to power and we'll use the United States and this song was that also so I I said well we'll use them but you really find out that you're not using them they are just using you because in any moment that you want to have an influence in in in the movement or to be

independent you are cut off from meetings or from money or from whatever you know or just they make you believe that you are somebody you are not you are they still flatter you that the media they need you face the middle you name the middle you you to be a victim maybe you know or to be a martyr you know they need you hey I want to jump to another experience was very painful for me I was but made me live really when I had to work with this CIA case officer who brought the manual on psychological operation I believe is a very important book to read for Americans if they were to understand what is the CIA all about that little book called the manual on-site ops you know is totally not anti-communist is the communist in the purest sense of the word manual where all the techniques or

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word manual where all the techniques or all the tactics or whatever expertise that have been accumulated not to force people to recruit people to embarrass people to humiliate people to Marty lies people to victimize people are there so you know that companions you know of these tactics was brought by the CL to me and I was responsible because I was the PR man at the same time I was in charge of the of the political education and the need for a political education came that the Contras were being trained by by Argentinians who were I mean for the military who preferred in tinea again you know a very persistent group really who who had a very you know simplistic approach to things so very brutal and very cruel and in some discussion I have been you know visiting contrasting and talking to to the soldiers being training and ask them why do you fight I like if I ask you you know why do you come here me so they didn't know why they were fighting I said but what would you tell people once you take a guitar I mean you are not at all you finish shooting people there are a few survivors you know there is a woman there and a man there a child what do you tell them you victorious country you walk into a hotel what is your line not a word I mean these people were just trying to kill you know to destroy to damage by yourself but this sandanista I tried to offend you I remember son in stuff from school I mean they were full of idea did to write paper they were using DTOs a lot of ideas in their head I mean a lot of ideas on paper writing and talking to

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of ideas on paper writing and talking to people and grass roots everywhere grassroots okay but the Contras don't have anything this is the political platform to have a plan have you ever heard a controller talking about political education about schools once they take over have you heard a few control it was it was an idea so I I said you know what I mean I was embarrassed in the CIA's office except why do you do we need so I got the idea when as far as Washington I think a particle so they said you know we need to give them a little book you know so the guideline I made the joke you know we need like my red book or qaddafi green book we need but I call it that I'm a blue book and I start working with my own little blue book that in some places there but the trial that was that they sent of this black book called the psychological operations manual something taken from for Brad story so it's very important and saying for you people to read that and I see that that book is about instrumentalization brutal simplistic instrumentalization when you create martyrs you assassinate Georgia's you selectively of course you know no random killing you know the great advance in education the United States it from random killing to selective killing you know so that those are the the qualitative changes you know that make difference between deterministic societies materialistic society and democratic societies where there is a higher degree of sophistication of a of you

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